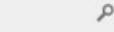


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Counting Sheep...One...Two...Three

BY VJOHNSON – JANUARY 22, 2014

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Story and Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class James Stenberg



Hospital Corpsman 3rd class John Betts, leading petty officer Neurology/Sleep Clinic, Naval Hospital Pensacola, attaches diagnostic equipment to a sailor in preparation for a sleep study. NHP performs sleep studies in an attempt to diagnose and treat sleep disorders.

Everyone has had the occasional sleepless night, but regular sleep problems can interfere with daily life and can be signs of a serious health problem.

Naval Hospital Pensacola's Sleep Clinic is able to help find out if someone's sleepless nights are being caused by something as simple as stress or a more underlying issue such as a sleep disorder.

Sleep disorders cause more than just restless nights. The lack of quality sleep can have a negative impact on a person's energy, emotional balance and health.

"A person that wakes up throughout the night because they are having trouble breathing or are having some other underlying condition can start to feel effects on their cognitive and mental functions," said Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class John Betts, leading petty officer, Neurology/Sleep Clinic, NHP. "If you deprive someone of sleep for 24, 48 or even 72 hours, they are not going to be functioning right. Their decision making abilities are going to decrease and the ability to function accordingly or to think [clearly] will start being affected tremendously as time goes on without sleep."

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, insufficient sleep is associated with a number of chronic diseases and conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity and depression. Not getting enough sleep is associated with the onset of these diseases and may also complicate their management and outcome.

A common sleep disorder is sleep apnea. Sleep apnea is where a person's breathing temporarily stops due to a blockage of the upper airways and the Sleep Clinic can identify this disorder by monitoring a person while sleeping.

"What we are trying to find [while observing a patient sleeping] is if there is a lack of breathing or an apneic event,



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- [A LOOK BACK](#)
- [FEATURES](#)
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which is no breathing," said Betts. "When you stop breathing at night, your oxygen saturation decreases and over time that can take a toll on your body."

Anyone who has sleep apnea and has had heart problems should be treated for the sleep apnea because they are more at risk for developing future cardiac complications.

"If a patient has a history of cardiac issues and they have apnea, it would be best to correct that issue as soon as possible," said Betts. "When your oxygen saturation drops, there is not enough oxygen flowing through your body. This means all your organs, including your heart, are not getting as much oxygen as they should so it can start causing more issues in the future for cardiac patients."

The Sleep Clinic at NHP has six beds to perform sleep studies and conducts the studies Monday – Thursday. The clinic is open to all NHP beneficiaries through referral only. If beneficiaries think that they may have a sleep disorder, they should talk to their primary care manager or Medical Home Port Team and discuss their options.

"Sleep is the most important thing [we do] because we spend a third of our life doing it," said Shawn Roy, Sleep Clinic manager, NHP. "When it's being disrupted by either sleep apnea or other things, our quality of life tends to go down, both mental and physical."



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